

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 ADP-00 NEAE-00 IO-12 SSC-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 OMB-01 EB-11 TRSE-00

NIC-01 RSR-01 INRE-00 /140 W
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P R 291315 Z MAR 73

FM USINT CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2819

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 0941

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV EG

SUBJECT : GOE CABINET CHANGE

REF: CAIRO 901; CAIRO 909; CAIRO 914

1. NOW THAT FULL CABINET LIST HAS BEEN PUBLISHED AND SADAT HAS EXHORTED THEM WITH THEIR OFFICIAL INSTRUCTIONS, IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT THE CHARACTER OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT CLOSELY PARALLELS THE POLITICAL POSITION OF SADAT: DEFENSIVE AND WITHOUT CONVINCING SENSE OF PURPOSE OR DIRECTION IN COPING WITH EGYPT' S PROBLEMS, BUT FUNCTIONING FAUTE DE MIEUX WITHOUT APPARENT RIVALS FOR POWER.

2. THE MAJOR POLICY DECISIONS WILL CONTINUE TO BE MADE BY
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SADAT WITH ADVICE PRIMARILY FROM AN IN- GROUP COMPRISING HATEM, HAFEZ ISMAIL, AHMED ISMAIL, VICE PRESIDENT FAWZI, GHANEM AND SPEAKER BEDAWI. ALTHOUGH BILLED AS A CONFRONTATION CABINET, WE SEE LITTLE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT IT WILL INSPIRE EGYPTIAN PEOPLE TO NEW LEVELS OF MOBILIZATION TO CONFRONT EITHER EXTERNAL ENEMIES OR INTERNAL PROBLEMS, DESPITE SADAT' S RHETORICAL EFFORTS TO SPUR THEM INTO GREATER ACTIVITY.

3. THEY ARE TECHNICIANS AND PEOPLE KNOWN PRIMARILY FOR THEIR PERSONAL LOYALTY TO SADAT. IN SOME CASES SADAT APPARENTLY HAD DIFFICULTY FINDING COMPETENT PEOPLE WILLING TO SERVE, AND SEVERAL OF THE MINISTERS ARE GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE INEFFECTIVE. AMONG THE EXCEPTIONS ARE YOUSSEF EL- SEBA' I, WHO IS A HIGHLY RESPECTED AUTHOR AND EX- OFFICIO HEAD OF THE EGYPTIAN HIGHER ARTS COUNCIL, AND MURAD GHALEB, A CAPABLE PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMAT WHO WAS PREVIOUSLY EASED OUT AS FOREIGN MINISTER AFTER A ROW WITH SIDKY. ZAYYAT AND SALEM ARE BOTH COMPETENT TECHNICIANS, ALTHOUGH WE DOUBT THAT THEY ARE AS INFLUENTIAL WITH SADAT AS SOME OF HIS OTHER CLOSE ADVISORS.

4. WE ARE NOT YET CERTAIN HOW THE FOUR DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERS WILL FUNCTION IN RELATION TO SADAT AND TO THE REST OF THE CABINET MEMBERS. IT IS NOTABLE THAT RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS HAS BEEN ACCORDED A SPECIAL STATUS IN THE CABINET THROUGH THE APPOINTMENT OF MINISTER ABDEL KAMEL AS A DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER. THIS MAY REFLECT SADAT' S OWN STRONG RELIGIOUS BENT AND PERHAPS HIS DESIRE TO DEAL WITH THE COPTIC/ MUSLIM PROBLEM AT A HIGHER LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT. IT MAY ALSO BE A BOW TOWARDS QADHAFI. CABINET ALSO MADE NOD TOWARD COPTS BY INCREASING THEIR REPRESENTATION FROM ONE TO TWO MEMBERS OF CABINET (SAAD AND SALAMA).

5. ONE INDIVIDUAL SEEMS TO HAVE GAINED CONSIDERABLY IN STATUS AND POWER AS A RESULT OF THE RESHUFFLE: ABDEL QADIR HATEM. MARCH 28 PRESS REPORTS THAT HATEM HAS BEEN DESIGNATED TO CHAIR CABINET MEETINGS WHEN SADAT CANNOT ATTEND AND TO PRESENT CABINET REPORTS TO PEOPLE' S ASSEMBLY WHEN NECESSARY. AHRAM ALSO REVEALED PLANS FOR A NEW INFORMATION COMMITTEE CHAIRED BY HATEM WHICH WILL INCLUDE EIGHT OTHER MEMBERS AMONG THEM THE MINISTERS OF INFORMATION, FOREIGN AFFAIRS, CULTURE, TOURISM, EDUCATION AND YOUTH. THESE ASSIGNMENTS WILL GIVE HATEM SUBSTANTIAL CONTROL OVER THE MEDIA AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF

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GOE POSITIONS AND MAY SIGNAL SOME DOWNGRADING OF ZAYYAT' S

STATUS SINCE HE HAS FREQUENTLY BEEN IN CONFLICT WITH HATEM
ON GOE PUBLIC POSITIONS ON FOREIGN POLICY.

6. CABINET RESHUFFLE WILL PROBABLY HAVE NO SIGNIFICANT
EFFECT ON LEVEL OR NATURE OF USINT CONTACTS ON ONGOING POLICY
AND PROGRAM MATTERS. WE EXPECT TO CONTINUE TO BE ABLE TO
DISCUSS THESE WITH APPROPRIATE MINISTERS AND THEIR SUBORDINATES,
INCLUDING FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ECONOMY, HEALTH, EDUCATION, SOCIAL
WELFARE, ETC.
GREENE

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*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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